

MASSACHUSETTS FARM BUREAU FEDERATION

MFBF'S LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES FOR THE 2023-2024 SESSION



The Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation (MFBF) is the largest general farming organization in the Commonwealth. It is a grassroots organization run by farmers, for farmers. All MFBF's policies are developed and approved by farmer members. Below are some of MFBF's legislative priorities for the 2023-2024 legislative session:

FARM BUREAU **SUPPORTS** THE FOLLOWING BILLS

SB588- An Act studying the effect of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances in commercial products

Sen. John Velis

- Greater awareness of and testing for per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances commonly referred to as "PFAS" or Forever Chemicals" has led to discovery of the chemicals in consumer products, water and soil on a global scale.
- Studies have shown that under certain circumstance PFAS presents a clear and present public health risk.
- Recently, Maine adopted legislation aimed at mitigating PFAS and, while well-intentioned, significant negative implications for agriculture have come to the forefront since the bill's passage.
- In Massachusetts, the prevalence of PFAS on agricultural land and in agricultural products is yet to be evaluated.
- As the science continues to evolve, we urge the legislature and state regulators to work with Massachusetts Farm Bureau and our partners to identify solutions that address public health risks and keep agriculture viable in the Commonwealth.

HB2337/SB1577 - An Act relative to the use of hoisting equipment in Chap. 74 vocational technical education

Rep. Pat Haddad & Sen. Marc Pacheco

- State regulators no longer allow vocational-technical and agricultural high school students to operate hoisting equipment as part of their studies.
- Vocational technical programs continue to provide extensive training on the use of hoisting equipment, and students must pass a safety test for each piece of hoisting equipment before they are permitted to use it.
- Maintenance and operation of hoisting equipment – by students – is a standard embedded within the Massachusetts Vocational Technical Education Framework for Horticulture (VHORT) and is required in the instruction of these programs.
- These bills are written to allow students to continue to train on hoisting equipment, provided that their on-site instructor holds a state hoisting license.

HB41-An Act amending Article 99 of the Constitution

Rep. Paul Schmid

- Chapter 61a ensures that agricultural land is taxed at a rate commensurate with the value of agricultural use.
- Several bills have been filed during the past 4 legislative session aimed at reducing the acreage threshold for Chapter 61a from 5 acres. All have failed due to language in Article 99 of the State Constitution stipulating a 5- acre minimum.
- Reducing the threshold from 5 acres would increase the amount of land available to farmers, protect open space and help farms be more financially viable.
- Such a change would benefit urban farms which often pay exorbitant property taxes and new farmers who often can't find farmland and existing farms which want to expand production.

SB442/HB2302-Relative to preventing the discharge of radioactive materials

Sen. Susan Moran/ Rep. Josh Cutler

- The Massachusetts Farm Bureau, Cape Cod Commercial Fishermen's Alliance and the Massachusetts Seafood Collaborative worked on legislative language concerning the decommissioning of the Pilgrim Nuclear Plant by Holtec International.
- This language resulted from our collective concern around the option of dumping wastewater from the plant into Cape Cod Bay. Specifically, we are worried about the safety of this disposal method in addition to the significant negative perception that would result.
- We believe that the resulting perception would damage Cape Cod's unique economy which is buoyed by the robust fishing and tourism industries.
- These bills would create a Commission to study the potential economic impact of radioactive water disposal into Cape Cod Bay and stipulate that no discharge of wastewater take place until 90 days after the issuance of the Commission's report.

HB3269-An act to enhance agricultural operations

Rep. Natalie Blais

- All-terrain vehicles (ATVs) have become increasingly popular for use on farms. However, many farms have fields that are separated by public roads, and it is illegal to use ATVs on roads.
- This bill would allow ATVs for farm use on roads for agricultural purposes, just as tractors are allowed. It includes provisions for safety equipment and requires the farm to submit information annually to the local police chief identifying those roads they would travel upon.

MASSACHUSETTS FARM BUREAU FEDERATION

MFBF'S LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES FOR THE 2023-2024 SESSION



SB2264-An Act relative to pup trailers

Sen. Paul Mark

- A pup-trailer is a common and valuable option for those in agriculture, manufacturing, and construction industries. These small trailers can be used to effectively transport building materials and to make home products delivery.
- This legislation would provide a legal framework for use of pup trailers in agricultural operations in the Commonwealth by amending the General Law to exempt such trailers (when used exclusively for the transportation of agricultural goods and products) from obtaining additional permits to operate on state or local roads.

SB216-An Act relative to horse riding instructors

Sen. Bruce E. Tarr

- The bill would remove the requirement that riding instructors be licensed.
- Massachusetts is the only state in the country that requires licensure of riding instructors.
- There are only 2 exams offered annually outside of Route 128/95 making it difficult for many stables to license their staff.
- The purpose of this exam is not clear, with little content related to riding instruction.
- From the equine community's perspective, this is a near perfect bill in that it removes an archaic requirement that is an impediment to business.

SB2132-An Act to further clean the Commonwealth's air

Sen. Anne Gobi

- This bill would amend the Alternative Portfolio Standard (APS) to offer an incentive to "modern wood heat" systems that install emission control devices to further the decarbonization efforts in the state.
- To be eligible for the APS, systems must already demonstrate that they are substantially cleaner than fossil fuel systems.
- This would add an additional small incentive to add emission control devices.

FARM BUREAU **OPPOSES** THE FOLLOWING BILLS

SB1837/ HB2812-An Act establishing fairness for agricultural workers

Sen. Adam Gomez/ Rep. Carlos Gonzalez

- These bills would provide Massachusetts farmworkers with more overtime and other protections than are provided under federal law and in 45 other states.
- We oppose capping the overtime exemption at 55 hours. The vast majority of other states allow unlimited exemptions from paying overtime. Further, a recent Supreme Judicial Court decision greatly limits those activities which qualify for the exemption. Only harvest and planting activities are exempt.
- Limiting overtime exemptions will, in many cases, result in farmers restricting the acreage they plant or the number of animals they raise.
- This will result in less work for farmworkers, as well as less food produced locally.
- The Commonwealth already has one of the highest costs of production in the country and farmers can only pass on so much cost to consumers given foreign and out-of-state product is readily available in supermarkets.

SB540/ HB814-An Act empowering towns and cities to protect residents and the environment from harmful pesticides

Sen. Susan Moran/ Rep. Carmine Gentile

- Opposing this legislation would help ensure consistent and cooperative regulation between the federal and state governments; municipal regulation would interfere with this consistency.
 - Cities and towns do not have the expertise to properly regulate pesticides.
 - MDAR administers pesticide use laws under the guidance of the Pesticide Board.
 - The Pesticide Board is a 13-member panel representing various interests, expertise and agencies (including DPH, DEP and DFW).
- Collectively, MDAR and the Pesticide Board have toxicologists, chemists, physicians, pesticide enforcement specialists, and other experts versed in disciplines directly related to the regulation of pesticides. This expertise ensures that pesticide regulation in the Commonwealth is science-based and rational.
- MDAR has cooperative agreements and ongoing communication with the U.S. EPA Office of Pesticide Programs, which regulates pesticides at the federal level.

**LEARN MORE
ONLINE: MFBF.NET**

249 Lakeside Ave • Marlborough, MA 01752

Tel: 508-481-4766 • Email: info@mfbf.net

Follow us on Facebook and Twitter: [@MAFarmBureau](https://www.facebook.com/MAFarmBureau)